

tributed to our present make-up; when we consider how we have been treated unjustly, how we have been assailed, misjudged, discriminated against, our color made a badge by which we are constantly marked for degradation and humiliation; how we have suffered in every way, even to death itself; how we have been the helpless victims of every crime under the sun — is it not a wonder that we have *any* morals, that we possess *any* patience, *any* forbearance, *any* courage, *any* determination, *any* hope — *any* virtues whatever?

Contrasting the Present with the Past

Yet we contrast the present with the past, and in the midst of deepest gloom, seek to see some rays of hope in the increasing wealth, education, culture, and refinement of our people. What we deplore is the lack of fairness in public sentiment which refuses to give us our right to a chance like other men, which stigmatizes us at every turn. The Negro of fifty years ago is often quoted as the only “good” Negro, because of his humility and servility. The Negro of to-day may be less humble and less servile. He is a free man, and all he asks is to be allowed to develop the manhood and womanhood of the race, to protect himself and family from insult, to have the rights that any citizen should have in this boasted free country. If the Negro of to-day is given this, if distinctions are drawn between the low and the high, if we are looked at as men and women, the world will see “good” in us to-day. It will find a people loyal to the North and South, ready to put down vice, and help build up for the best of all concerned; ready to join hands in all good works, to further all good causes, and foster all good feelings.

I believe that, after all, few would wish back the Negro of fifty years ago with the consequent situation. We are in a changing world, a world of brisk movement and wonderful progress. To help a people to move upward to the light means that there must be broad minds, broad views, broad plans, a widening of “the thoughts of men with the process of the suns”; a broad humanity, in fact, that will see that the “backward” races are allowed the opportunity for that development that God means all men to have. For God, who made man in his image, surely never meant that that image should be crushed to the level of the brute. No, I believe as my creed, that we are all created to develop the best and highest within us, and that it is our duty to do it, and that the curse will fall upon those who put forth a hindering hand.

Speaking for Ten Million Negroes

I speak for a constituency of some ten million Negroes when I say to you: Help to keep open the door of hope for the race; help us to eradicate ignorance; help us to elevate the masses — and the white people of this country will feel the reflex influence in a wonderfully improved civilization for themselves in all things.

I pray, not that the world may see the re-duplication of the Negro as he was fifty years ago, but that it may see in a not distant future a *new Negro*, emancipated in all things — a day when the true Brotherhood of Man in a grand Federation of the World shall be accomplished.

Such is my earnest prayer, and I believe with that great poet of the good Victoria's reign, that

“More things are wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams.”

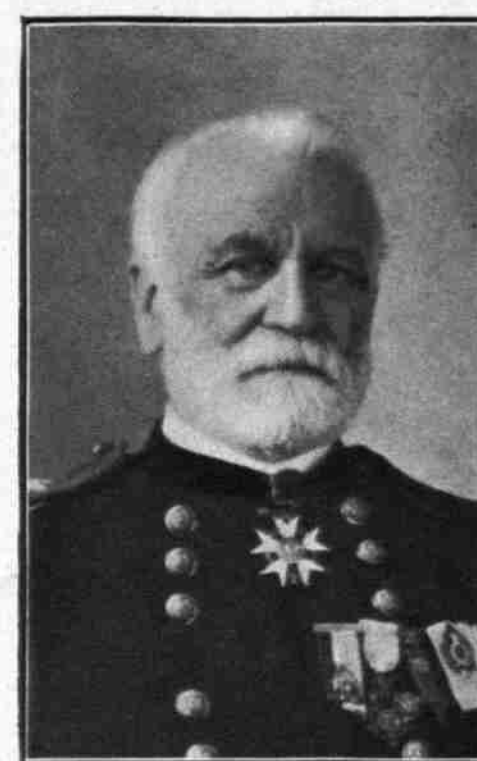
The Negro as a Free Man

Gen. Oliver O. Howard, Burlington, Vt.

Chairman of Board, Lincoln Memorial University (White), Cumberland Gap, Tenn. At Clifton Conference, August 18, 1908

I THOUGHT I would begin a little back. We older men can't help remembering many things. Before I went to the middle West after the battle of Gettysburg, I had a talk with Mr. Lincoln and he interested me in the people of the mountains. After some time I came again to where Mr. Lincoln

was. I talked with Mr. Stanton. He was Secretary of War, and he told me that Mr. Lincoln in conferring with him, a little while before his death, said that he wanted General Howard to be the Commissioner of Freedmen under that new law that had passed. You know he passed away, and Mr. Stanton told me this. I asked for time to consider it.



Gen. Oliver O. Howard

I had been thinking what I would do after the war. I went down to my hotel to consider it for the night. I think I considered it carefully. It appeared to me to be a duty, so I took the position. I went over the ground care-